Essential questions reside at the top of *Bloom's Taxonomy* (Bloom, 1954). They require students to EVALUATE (make a thoughtful choice between options, with the choice based upon clearly stated criteria), to SYNTHESIZE (invent a new or different version) or to ANALYZE (develop a thorough and complex understanding through skillful questioning).

Essential questions spark our curiosity and sense of wonder. They derive from some deep wish to understand something which matters to us.

Answers to essential questions cannot be found. They must be invented. It is something like cooking a great meal. The researcher goes out on a shopping expedition for the raw ingredients, but "the proof is in the pudding." Students must construct their own answers and make their own meaning from the information they have gathered. They create insight.

Essential questions engage students in the kinds of real life applied problem-solving suggested by nearly every new curriculum report or outline curriculum standards such as the NCTM and the Science Standards. Essential questions usually lend themselves well to multidisciplinary investigations.